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Different Risks, Different Biographies: The Roles of Reversibility for Buryats and Circularity for Evenki People

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Abstract: The article is based on fieldwork conducted in Southern Siberia among Buryat and Evenki people in 2006. By comparing the strategies of risk management persons with articulated biographies (Buryat shaman and Evenki businessman) use, we investigated the general patterns of ways Evenki and Buryat people deal with the world, search or avoid risks, construct own biographies. The reversibility and linearity play important roles for Buryats. Evenki people experience the circularity in all the processes and search for multiplicity.

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1. Introduction

In the spring of 2000, a team of hypnotists toured the Irkutsk district. Their hypnosis demonstrations conducted in local Houses of Culture required the participation of volunteers from the audience. Besides memory games (during which participants were unable to recognize their siblings) they demonstrated the level of trust audience members had in strangers by asking them to fall backwards into their hands. One such show was a huge success in a village not far from our original fieldwork site among Ekhirit Buryats. The audience and volunteers consisted primarily of Russians and Evenki people. The hypnosis seemed to work and people forgot their names, failed to recognize their brothers and sisters, fell into the arms of the hypnotists etc. The show the following day was in a village of Ekhirit Buryats, and Istvan, who witnessed the success in the Russian-Evenki village, went to see how things would go in the Ekhirit community. The audience consisted almost exclusively of young, skeptical people. From the beginning, the show was a failure with only one exception, a woman known to be mentally ill and slow witted. At the end of the show the hypnotists blamed their failure on the audience's lack of seriousness and resistance to contributing to the show. In response, a volunteering participant, a

young man of 16 exclaimed: "What were you expecting?! We do not give ourselves to anybody! And how did you strangers think you could make us lose our control?" [1]

The difference in the shows lay in the participants' eagerness, easiness to become involved in a situation, to forget things, and to concentrate on concrete and singular stimuli. For Evenki and Russians, the hypnotists' show was entertaining; a game in which they were eager to participate. For Buryats, it was a serious and unpleasant attempt to intrude, which they resisted rather strongly. Here we will not delve deeply into why they responded so differently, but rather, will use this experiment and its failure as the starting point in the investigation and comparison of strategies Evenki and Buryat people use to accomplish such routine practices as hunting and business. The question of trust, involvement in or distance from a situation, ability to forget and remember contexts, and the skill of concentration, are all important to coordinate and conduct successful hunting and business. The hypnotists' show demonstrated that Evenki and Buryat people live in different modes of action, or regimes of coordination, in which these elements (self control, concentration, forgetting and remembering and so forth) are differently organized. This initial distinction explains why the Buryat and Evenki initiatives were so different in practice, and is important to keep in mind when looking at collaboration between Buryats and Evenki. Although they sometimes live very similarly, and are involved in the same occupations (such as hunting), their life experiences are different. By comparing the strategies of two outstanding personages, the Buryat shaman and the Evenki businessman, we would like to show exactly how these modes of action and thought differ. [2]

This anthropological research is based on two sessions of fieldwork conducted in 2004 and 2006 in the Baikal region among the Evenki and Buryat people. The group of Buryats who were the subject of the research represent only a small proportion of the total Ekhirit Buryats people (60 out of a total population of 18,000 Ekhirit Buryats) and are atypical of the majority cattle breeding Buryat in that their lifestyle is based on hunting and living in taiga. Because the Buryats are not hunter-gatherers by social organization, and verbal communication is important in the culture, we used primarily unstructured interviews as the research method. The Evenki group who was the subject of this research (circa 150 people) has the same egalitarian social organization as other hunter-gatherers of the world. Nonverbal communication is particularly important here and we needed to use participant observation as the main method of study. The difference in methods we used to study the two neighboring groups who lead common lifestyles based on taiga resources, shows how different are their epistemological bases. [3]

2. Trying to Control Risks and Biographies

Forgetting allows one to take an active position and participate in highly intense situations requiring a great deal of attention and emotional involvement. This is especially important in hunting when quick reactions should be based not on considerations and recognition of norms, but spontaneous, embodied, knowledge based on personal experiences such as skills (SÁNTHA & DIALLO, 2006). For Ekhirit Buryats from the west side of Lake Baikal to forget their responsibilities and duties (family, home, household and village) is crucial to succeed in hunting, an occupation not typical for Buryats, who appeal to shamans for help and conduct rituals and pray to their ancestors to forget their cultural backgrounds. The moment they enter the taiga is a moment of transition, after which they must navigate in the empty (from the Buryat perspective) environment, unmarked with sacred places. Forgetting is problematic not only because it is difficult to do consciously, but also because it can be an irreversible process. Without remembering something a person could become lost. Buryats associate loss of orientation (control) with madness (mental illness). Two, standout cases make this point: *hünehen gara* (the rite of *ürikke* performed by old women when a child in the family becomes frightened), and the practice of elders going to the taiga to die. These episodes demonstrate the vulnerability of forgetting, but also its effectiveness in dealing with crucially important tasks. [4]

The region in which our study took place shows how environmental circumstances affect a community. Western Buryats now live on territories previously inhabited by Evenki people, whose main occupation was hunting. Contrarily, Buryat's social organization is specifically oriented on cattle breeding and living in the steppe environment, and their emotional integration is based on the clan structure and association of individuals as clan members. This hierarchical structure is typical for steppe occupations, but is not widespread among hunters. [5]

What we see in the local, western, Buryat community is the interconnection between steppe and taiga strategies. The social structure of the Buryat community is rather rigid and is based on a lexical knowledge about genealogies and ancestors (HUMPHREY, 1979). The hierarchical positions of all members dictate when and how this lexical knowledge can be transmitted—meaning, Buryats are aware of hierarchy in their everyday interactions and control the kind of knowledge they communicate to others (TOREN, 1999). For Buryats, excluding outsiders saves private matters from public control. The taiga strategy is absolutely different and is based on egalitarian relations and quick reactions in extreme situations (such as hunting). This flexibility is needed to act spontaneously. These strategies require different, and sometimes contradicting, regimes of self-control. Thus, the interaction of steppe and taiga strategies could prove problematic for Buryats, and may require special mechanisms of integration. Not every Buryat can present an autobiography. For Buryats the ability to reflect on one's own life experiences requires special socialization and lexical knowledge, as well as special language and concepts. For Buryats, an authority figure must be able to confirm his higher position by performing as a

special character, the manifestation of his *utkha*, which is the ability to reflect on his life and interpret it in terms of ancestors. *Utkha* is a cognitive scheme through which an individual categorizes his personal experiences and constructs an autobiography. It is a complex category based on knowledge about ancestors and relations with them through personal genealogies. Individual character and talents are accepted by the community only when associated with the character and talents of a well-known ancestor. The delineated role defined after birth is a very strong instrument of control, which influences the entire biography of a person in this community. Hence, when a child is born in a Buryat family, the child's grandparents conduct a special ritual during which they wish the baby to inherit the characters of his/her ancestors (for example, to become a shaman like a certain ancestor). Not all families posses such skills and concepts (their members are unable to present their autobiographies, and as a result, fail to gain authoritative position). A child is appreciated when he/she shows the traits of the legendary ancestor or an inclination towards the outlined career. Knowledge of ancestors (from which people with *utkha* are directly descended) is a bank of possibilities for children, it is the cultural or symbolic capital of the family. Elder children are in a privileged position because of the fear that they might be the only heirs to the father's *utkha*. Thus, the symbolical distribution of family capital among the children is not equal. [6]

Western Buryats face a specific situation where they must adapt their cultural system to the environment of the taiga. While hunting is crucial because the forest provides financial profit from furs, and food, local Buryats have found a way to continue cattle breeding in the forest with a slightly different emotional experience. Hunting is a risky business based on luck. It requires involvement with the environment and the ability to react spontaneously and adequately in quickly changing circumstances. When hunting, it is necessary to forget all else (household, family, health and village) and become completely involved in the situation. Hence, in hunting, luck depends on the ability to forget. On the contrary, the reputation of a Buryat depends on his ability to remember (genealogical knowledge pertaining to the *utkha*). The ethos of local Buryats suffers from a contradiction between the values of forgetting and remembering. To be successful in hunting and at the same time integrated into the local community, Buryats need to balance remembering and forgetting. The shaman helps to maintain a balance between the two, allowing Buryats to retain their identity in the everyday, high-risk circumstances of Evenki hunters. [7]

2.1 The biography of shaman Bargai

The shaman, Bargai, is a remarkable person because of his peculiar background. He inherited shamanic *utkha* from his grandfather, which allowed him to be emotionally and rationally involved in the history of his clan. His father, who also conducted shamanic rituals, made friends with Evenki hunters and lived in the Evenki taiga environment in a way suitable for a western Buryat. He left Bargai alone for a night in a forest when Bargai was six. As a result, Bargai lost his fear of the forest and later became a good hunter. His extraordinary skills provided the basis for his reputation and authority among Western Buryats. [8]

Bargai‘s reputation is also based on his ability not only to conduct rites connecting people with their ancestors, but on fortune-telling providing focus before a hunt or raid. If Bargai predicts an unlucky outcome for a hunt, it serves as a diagnosis; he recognizes the imbalance between forgetting and remembering—the hunter is not calm but worries about something external that will hinder his ability to focus and react quickly. Bargai is not a typical shaman; he proposes services to clients who cannot forget something as well as clients who cannot remember. He remembers stories not only about his, but also of others' ancestors and narrates them perfectly. At the same time, Bargai tells his own hunting stories about failures and trophies, but none about the process of successful hunting, which doesn't leave clear memories (for example, killing is an experienced action [participation] without narratives and clear categories). Hunting is about forgetting things and being so deeply involved in the situation that an external perspective simply is not possible. [9]

Narratives about ancestors mainly revolve around risky situations, dramas and tragedies. Incorporating a personal risk experience into the knowledge about ancestors (for example, if the present story occurs at a holy place where two shamans fought and killed each other).Narratives and storytelling boost an individual's reputation in the community. This emphasizes the importance of remembering as the essence of Buryat culture (HUMPHREY, 1979). For Buryats, to remember means to integrate your own experience into the legendary history. Historical knowledge about ancestors creates a filing-system or catalog, for people in the present to make sense of their experiences and stories. Thus, the greater the individual knowledge of ancestral history, the richer the repertoire of personal memories. Furthermore, only those with such knowledge have *utkha* and an autobiography. For example, Bargai once told a story about how his son fell asleep while driving under the influence. Bargai, who was elsewhere, felt what had happened and immediately conducted a ritual. His son suddenly awoke as his car approached the edge of the road, and barely managed to escape his own death. Bargai interprets this situation through the *zayan* (a spirit helper sent by ancestors) of his family. He could remember and retell the whole story only because the ancestors woke his son. As the shaman possesses the most extended filing-system of knowledge about ancestors, he bears the richest autobiography in his local community. His "memories" are the basis upon which rituals are conducted for those who do not possess the needed knowledge and skill to construct their own biographies and reflect on their personal experiences. [10]

The process of forgetting, like most cognitive processes, is influenced by the social environment. Forgetting can be very difficult and may require special cultural techniques. The shaman specializes in filtering out or ignoring contexts that disturb people them in order to concentrate on particular tasks. The ability to *temporarily* forget grants an individual the courage to take decisive action without losing complete control of a situation. The balance between consciousness and lack of awareness is an important part of successful hunting. Buryat hunters learn this without the support of their society, because as a new occupation, hunting is not integrated into the cultural system. In fact, we can say that during hunting, local people are not Buryats; they become Buryats only when coming home from

hunting. The forest is associated with Evenki and is a strange environment for Buryats. Shamans such as Bargai, who have close relations with Evenki, help local Buryats to adopt the technique of forgetting by conducting a ritual. When a hunter feels uncertain about his ability to reach *negen hanan* (one thought—in the Buryat language) because of a dream, an encounter with someone on his way to forest, an event in his family—anything that could distract the hunter from his task—he goes to Bargai. The shaman tells the man's fortune with stones, which helps to indicate the problem or source of irritation. Bargai presents it in categories of Buryat culture, or as signs sent by the ancestors (to forget something you need first to remember about your ancestors and perform a ritual of respect for them). The ritual is a mixture of Bargai's reflections, speeches about the ancestors from Buryat ancestors, to tribe and clan ancestors, and on to subclan and lineage identities, to the hunter as individual), and drinking vodka. Drinking is a very important part of the ritual; it is through the process of intoxication that client and shaman switch from remembering to forgetting. Furthermore, vodka is the primary sacrifice to ancestors and it is believed that human bodies filter and clean the alcohol for the spirits. [11]

The shamanic rite is a technique to control and manage memories. The shaman is a specialist who restores and interprets lost memories. His authority is based on his own control over his memories. The right of the shaman to perform rituals and manipulate the memories of others is determined by his authoritative position in society and through improvisation. From this point of view, storytelling is a shamanic rite serving as a practice in itself: it is the ongoing retelling of his own biography associated with the legendary history of ancestors. The tragedies and dramas of legendary scale are supported by his personal experience of risk. In his rituals, the shaman behaves in accordance with the character of his ancestors (*utkha*), through which he re-secures his superior position. The hierarchical position of ancestors in genealogies is also the symbolic expression of the structural position of the authoritative figure in a Buryat community. [12]

The ability to present an autobiography packed with risky situations is essential for the shaman. Experiencing and speaking about risky situations are intertwined in shamanic practice because telling is considered no less dangerous than experiencing. The main danger in shamanic practice is the necessity to maintain control while going through the process of forgetting with clients without becoming an alcoholic; the seduction to recommend a ritual is very strong for the shaman as there is no other figure who can call for the rite. Frequently, the shaman asks for more vodka than necessary for the rite and forgets he is working with very fragile and personal matters. The risk of alcoholism and aggression towards family members, leading to the loss of the community's essential trust, is a looming threat keeping the shaman in check. [13]

The integrity of the Buryat community is based on the process of incorporating individual autobiographies into the biography of the clan through genealogy. Risky situations, as problematic experiences, are the rough material for an autobiography due to the reminiscence about the tragic and dramatic ancestral history. A tragic death is one, main and common criteria for a dead relative to

become an ancestor, and the source of emotion for descendants. Social cohesion and personal freedom is based on the individual ability to remember and to forget. Over-socialization, if there is such a thing, is expressed in the Buryat community by a fixation on past events and the inability to be attentive to the present. [14]

2.2 Calling the frightened soul back

Socialization in the Buryat community is a process of acquiring skills to forget and to remember. The distribution of the clan's knowledge about ancestors as a scheme of interpretation of personal experiences is unequal between genders. Daughters are to some extent strangers in their own families as they will give birth to children in other clans. Hence, girls are usually excluded from learning the *utkha* and cannot reflect on their biographies through the ancestral scheme to obtain higher positions. Furthermore, interest in ancestors differs according to age groups. When men loose direct power over their children they participate more in shamanic rituals and practice their symbolic power of knowledge at the community level. At the same time, aging women return to their motherland and initiate rituals for themselves with their paternal clan's shamans. Aging also represents the process of balancing between remembering and forgetting, taking risks and speaking about them in the Buryat community. [15]

Sudden, deep fear can provide a focus of attention and fixation, which becomes dangerous, when irreversible. Such states present a special danger to small children as they cannot regain self-control and distance themselves from the ongoing situation when extremely scared or frightened. Children require the support of adults as they cannot fully master their own emotions and intentions. This support is realized in the continuous attention of adults, mainly mothers. The mother's constant gaze provides the feeling of being observed at all times, which leads to the development of self-reflection and scrutiny. The moment when a child becomes scared is the moment when he or she does not feel the presence of his/her mother's attention. Thus, the only way to calm the child is to assure him/her of the continuity of his/her mother's attention and care. But at that exact moment, the mother does not know what scared the child, meaning emotionally she cannot reassure or calm the child. To calm the child and mother, the eldest woman in the family conducts a ritual, *urikke*, to recall the frightened soul of the child. Special instruments and words are used to invite the soul to return, and these actions help to repair the destroyed unity of the mother and child. The eldest woman, using a special arrow (with the depiction of a human on the arrow-head), leads the soul into a special pot, providing the illusion of reversibility of the situation, as if the arrow can also be recalled. The shaman conducts analogical rituals when hunters are lost in the forest, or their thoughts are too focused on hunting. Bargai calls their souls back and restores the continuity of self-control and self-observation that were interrupted while hunting. [16]

Reversibility is a fundamental conflict for Buryats. They simultaneously search for stable and irreversible situations, and attempt to adapt to changing environments. This conflict lies in the contradiction between Buryat narrative and explanation,

and activities. According to the scheme of ancestors, the process of life is strictly lineal, for example- the line of inheritance from ancestors to living people. Even reincarnation happens without any changes in the clan. However, there are exceptions to this lineal rule. Not everyone can claim to have a relationship with the clan, and not all events can be interpreted in the frame of a strict lineal logic. In practice, few people can realize such a straight logic in their thoughts and actions. They can either trust the interpretations of the shaman, or postpone decisions until they feel more confident. For example, during the soviet times, many customs and a great deal of knowledge about ancestors were forgotten or kept in secret. Nowadays, when so many rituals are not conducted at the proper time, it is sometimes considered dangerous to initiate a ritual at all. The lineal logic has been broken and there is no continuity in the ritualistic process. People speak of spirits hungry for sacrifice who demand more and more. But, with the increasing difficulty in deciding which rituals are most important and which rituals can be postponed, it seems better not to initiate any ritual at all. [17]

Once, the parents of an injured child went to the shaman, who prescribed a grandiose ritual. The parents postponed the sacrifice, even forgot about it, and did not disturb the spirits of the ancestors to heal their child. However, they were forced to look for the causes of their child's disease in the ancestral frame, which demanded an immediate, irreversible sacrifice. The refusal to conduct such a ritual could be even more dangerous than the abuse that caused the disease. Keeping in mind the danger of the spirits' appetite, it was much more effective to pretend there was no point. In practice, the parents were trying to make this situation reversible, to return to the moment when they had not asked the shaman's advice, and had not received the order to perform the ritual. Although there was a contradiction in the logic of the explanations, in practice this worked. The parents forgot about the ritual and their child recovered. Such manipulations of reversibility and irreversibility have become rather frequent, especially in cases of dramatic changes such as the soviet anti-shamanic movement, or simply a change in the place of residence. Concerning the latter, these manipulations are rather resistant and can be found in the community life of people who moved to new territory centuries ago. Ekhirit Buryats are a good example of this as their newcomers' complex remains very strong despite having lived in lands previously occupied by Evenki for more than 300 years. [18]

3. Searching for Risks and Combining Different Things

Buryat morality consists of the conjunction of lineal logic (irreversibility) and the constant pressure of ancestral control, and emphasizes the inevitability of atonement. Therefore, avoiding risk and error reduction are the main frames for any activity in which Buryats are involved, especially hunting. For example, if a hunter returns injured, or without a trophy, then the conclusion based on this morality is that he was punished for failing to provide a sacrifice to the ancestors' spirit (Evenki women for Ekhirit Buryats), who saw his hunting attempts as poaching and theft. Yet, if the hunt goes smoothly and the hunter returns with game, than no one would suggest that he stole or unrightfully took the game. Hence, if you cannot put aside your morality as a Buryat, you cannot be a

successful hunter; you can never focus completely on the task as you remain unsure of the status of your actions. Furthermore, as hunting is not a typical Buryat activity the trepidation is stronger as there is no consensus on the proper way to hunt. A successful hunter must forget the morality and the prospect of punishment. He must be a risky character who can shoot an animal without hesitation for fear that it might be an ancestor, and the soul of his own children. In contrast, Evenki have no such problems. They feel free to forget anything unimportant for the task upon which they are focused, and do not feel guilt afterwards. [19]

For Buryats, the Evenki ability to take risks seems almost suicidal. Bargai once told a story about how neighboring Evenki from the rivers Ilga and Kulenga disappeared after the Second World War. During this time Russians left the territory to some extent and did not buy fur. The Russians left the Evenki alone, and most Evenki began stealing horses from the Russians (horses were precious during the war as a mode of transport on the front). Evenki didn't need horses during this period, but were attracted to the risk and high profit of the activity. This was incomprehensible for Buryats. Evenki could hunt during the war and did not suffer from hunger like peasants who were obliged to supply food to the army. This was quite an easy time for the Evenki. Buryats could not understand why entire Evenki families began such a risky business as stealing horses. Nearly all the local Evenki were caught and sent to jail, and released only after Stalin's death. Evenki never managed to fully recover as a community from this long absence; younger people left the territory to live in villages, and older people returned to their land to die alone. [20]

As we can see from this historical episode, for Evenki, risk is not a preventing factor, but on the contrary, a source of inspiration. Evenki also differ from Buryats in their attitude towards stealing. For Buryats, stealing is dangerous because it can arouse the anger of the owner and an unavoidable punishment. For Evenki, stealing is not an immoral deed, but a very difficult task. This attitude is supported by the notion of an all-giving or abundant environment. Other hunter-gatherers (BIRD-DAVID, 1983; GARDNER, 2000) and cultures of poverty (SCHEPER-HUGHES, 1993; TURNBULL ,1972) have similar concepts. For Evenki, stealing is not an illegal act, but a way of obtaining badly needed things that could not be bought or exchanged. This is a trait of poverty going beyond the market economy. When hunting, for example, if they have enough bullets, Evenki kill as many animals as they come across. Thus, they rarely hunt legally with a certified gun and hunting license prescribing how many animals they can kill. The illegality of their hunt, and the cost of illegal bullets and guns present the only constraints that stop Evenki from over-killing. Hence, hunting exists only in the form of poaching, but this does not pose a problem for Evenki themselves (SAFONOVA & SÁNTHA, 2007). [21]

Poaching and hunting are practically the same, as hunting is only possible on those territories where it is officially prohibited. Sanctuaries or nature reserves are usually over-crowded with hunters, and thus, there is not enough prey. Illegal hunting is possible for natives in civilized and technically equipped society only

with the covert assistance of those special services employed to prevent such activities. Because their territories were closed as a nature reserve, hunting as an occupation full of risks and emotional involvement still exists for Evenki in Jirga. In this region, although hunting has lost its place in the market economy, it maintains an important emotional role for the Evenki community because it is illegal. In the neighboring region of Baunt, hunting lost its emotional power when it became the legal framework for organizing other occupations such as gold mining or reindeer herding. It no longer required courage, secrecy and quickness, or cohesive teamwork in frames of companionship. Illegal hunting is more cohesive; it involves various people to obtain information about the wards' schedule, illegal equipment, and secret places for storage and butchering. From this point of view, poaching is an emotionally appealing activity for Evenki. [22]

3.1 Business like hunting

Evenki business activities usually involve some form of poaching; a team of several people organizes an expedition to the taiga to extract or obtain something for which they have no official license. Because Evenki are perhaps the only people who can conduct such a dangerous trip, they frequently use their skills to compete with the official state brigades. In the Kurumkan region, illegal logging carried out by a team of Evenki is the only business enterprise that exists in the whole district. In the Baunt region, more than 10 groups are involved in activities such as logging, gold mining and nephrite extraction. These unofficial, expedition parties were extremely successful at the beginning of the 1990s when official extraction and logging was practically non-existent. These unstable times gave rise to the Evenki way of doing business based not on regularities and long term planning, but rather on situational flexibility. [23]

One such brigade gained a rather powerful position in the region and became famous throughout the republic. This brigade now resembles a corporation and is known in Evenki as Dylacha, meaning sun or sunshine. The father of one of the founders of this enterprise, Andrew, was an Evenki who migrated to Baunt from the Kurumkan district. Andrew leads his business in an Evenki style; he searches for risks and combines very different things. We can outline a number of parallels between Andrew's strategies in business (investments strategies, ranges, multiplicity, communication with associates, and personal lifestyle) and typical Evenki strategies in hunting. At the same time, he had to transform some things to integrate his enterprise into the infrastructure of the Russian and Buryat societies of the region. Evenki do not work directly for Andrew—his staff consists of Buryats and Russians who can submit to his authority. For local Evenki, Andrew is a partner in numerous companionships in which he participates mainly as an *andaki* (partner with whom you exchange in Evenki language) —the stranger who can momentarily pretend to be an equal as long as common interests keep them in a rather situated partnership. Andrew himself never thoroughly coordinates the actions of his staff, but in a way, plays with people by showing them attention and control. [24]

The Dylacha now owns a number of factories and small firms, though its primary income remains based on exploitation of the taiga, mainly nephrite mining. The latter is exclusively the Dylacha's business in the district; only the Dylacha managed to initiate contacts with main business partners—Chinese buyers—in this sphere. Nephrite is a sacred stone in China and every family has a little sculpture made from nephrite. It is an enormous market that cannot be filled with existing Chinese deposits. The rich deposit in Baunt is closest to the Chinese market. Andrew and his partners established contacts with Chinese businessmen through his relationships with Chinese Evenki. This was the first, common background that helped to establish the businessmen's trust. Evenki became the common language to start trading. Now, both sides use translators. Andrew understands Chinese but takes precautions and uses a translator to negotiate deals. He also hires local people from central settlements to work in the mine. The workers stay in the forest the entire season, and are supplied with food by raiding groups patrolling the territory to reduce poaching and theft of nephrite and gold. These patrolling groups consist mainly of Buryats controlled by former Russian soldiers. This strict hierarchy is always attacked by local Evenki, who do not officially work in the mine. From time to time, using their connections with hired workers, Evenki organize small expeditions to the deposit or leftover mines and extract nephrite. Because they use their own labor and never steal prepared nephrite, Andrew does not deal with them directly. Although he could give directions to catch and punish poachers so "nobody would ever find any trace of their bodies in the mountain rivers of the region," the interaction between Dylacha's security guards and locals remains a game rather than a war. When caught, Evenki can pretend they received Andrew's permission to mine a bit of nephrite as a part of his social policy in the region. However, such explanations are received with skepticism. Poachers try to avoid security guards, because no one knows whether the threats are real or not. [25]

Despite the high profits from Nephrite, and smaller profits from gold, Dylacha does not exclusively focus on extraction of natural resources, but buys factories that went bankrupt in the 1990s. These projects require a strong, long-term, financial investment. For example, Dylacha bought the biggest dairy factory in the region, a complex of storehouses for vegetables and other foods, and a sausage factory. These enterprises existed during soviet times, but were nearly destroyed during the initial, post-soviet years. Somehow they work, but not as they previously did, and not profitably. For example, Andrew bought the sausage factory because there was not enough meat in Ulan-Ude and it seemed like a very good investment. He even wanted to buy equipment from Hungary (known to produce high-quality smoked sausages). The plan was to import cheap meat from neighboring Mongolia. The project froze as the (state official) responsible for importing meat from Mongolia had his own, private meat factory and was not interested in helping his competitors. [26]

Dylacha's investments go beyond transforming the destroyed soviet industry. Brick shortages inspired the idea to build a brick factory. Dylacha first sponsored a small factory to produce enough bricks to build a big factory. This investment proved rather successful due to a building boom. Dylacha also buys small-scale

firms with less chance to survive independently, such as small shops, entertainment centers and restaurants. [27]

These investments lack a concrete program of consortium development, but rather represent spontaneous and flexible reactions towards possibilities. Andrew tries to leave open any possibility for future profits, and does not fixate on concrete branches of his firm. In this he acts like an Evenki hunter leaving for the taiga without a preconception of what he should catch or kill, and if fishing suddenly strikes him as a good idea, he would immediately change direction, or go to gather berries. All possible profits are good, but the most appealing is independence. Dylacha invests in numerous projects at the same time, without waiting for immediate feedback. At a given moment perhaps only one project is profitable, making the system stable and independent. By investing in a wide range of industries, Dylacha secures its autonomy, which is of the utmost importance for Evenki. Not focusing on one, concrete industry prevents the company from being swallowed by a larger company, or by destabilization following a crisis. The investment strategy does not stem from the idea of the growth of the corporation and its profits, but by the idea of making the company more independent and self-sufficient. The investor's gaze is like that of a hunter who searches a territory to evaluate the possibilities. [28]

The independence that Dylacha achieves requires security to ensure it is not misinterpreted as an attempt at separatism from state—independence is secured through performed dependency on the state and Kremlin. A uranium deposit in the Baunt territory is a condition for Andrew's legacy. Under Andrew's supervision as a head of the Baunt administration, he guides this strategic deposit for the future. From this perspective, Dylacha is subordinate to the state directly in terms of securing the state's important resource, and not through other state organizations. [29]

3.2 Lifestyle of Evenki businessmen

Andrew can be compared with Sveta (the ranger from Jirga open for companionships with most Evenki and others living in that area), because he plays with different roles and identities to establish relationships and contacts with various people. Andrew and his sister Tanya, who is also involved in the business, can share most of the articulated perspectives in the region. They are Evenki. [30]

Andrew speaks fluent Evenki and was raised as a hunter and reindeer herder after his father. Andrew presents himself as a Buddhist and personal friend of the Dalai Lama. He was one of the main sponsors of the Buddhist temple in Ulan-Ude, and even presented a giant, gold, sculpture of Buddha from China to the Buddhist community of the Republic. Tanya presents herself as orthodox, and sponsors the building of the only Orthodox Church in Bagdarin—the district center of the Baunt region. Their mother was Russian and worked as a schoolteacher, which gives them the background to establish contacts with Russians. Many believe Andrew can control his drinking because of his mother's

Russian blood, a great advantage as business negotiations are usually arranged during parties. Andrew's wife comes from a local Buryat-Chinese family. Andrew speaks Russian and Evenki fluently and can be associated with Evenki, Russian, Buryat and Chinese networks simultaneously. Formally, he is the head of the local administration, and cannot lead his own business. Unofficially, however, he heads the Dylacha. His sister equally represents the family's interests. Andrew and Tanya, as leaders of Dylacha, use their gender identities to conduct negotiations when appropriate. For example, Tanya especially can negotiate compromises between differing interests among men. This rather extended repertoire of identities and roles proves extremely helpful for them in their interactions with various agents. Their identities are not rules and constraints predetermining their behavior, but rather resources and advantages to be used in gaining entrance to various, separated networks simultaneously. [31]

In business, Andrew acts like a hunter collaborating with hunting dogs, either Tanya or other partners. These business partners find (or even feel) newly emerging possibilities and chase after them. For example, if a small business, such as a private beach, faced a crisis and the owner needed capital to pay debts, the owner would first approach Tanya or her assistants for help. In fact, his approach comes as a result of hunting him and his business; his troubles and the resources he needs expose him to Dylacha like prey chased by a dog towards a hunter. The hunter decides whether or not to shoot with quick movements and intuition. Tanya and Andrew sometimes work as a pair, like the hunter and his dog. Andrew makes decisions, but if he decides not to invest in a business he never says so directly. Instead, he presents his decision as a postponement. Andrew forgets the client's request, or pretends to, to keep the possibility open. This means that those involved with Dylacha never realize when their business dealings have ended, even if no concrete actions follow. Like experienced hunters, Dylacha's heads keep their eye on the target only for a moment, they may be interested in bigger trophies, but keep an eye on smaller possibilities in their territory in case of bad luck, hunger or need, and will eventually catch everything they can. [32]

As previously mentioned, negotiations and business meetings do not take place in the office, but at various parties in the restaurants of Ulan-Ude. Only Andrew's secretary can be found at his official cabinet. Andrew changes his phone number regularly, taking full control over who can contact him through his assistants. This is common among other Evenki specialists such as shamans. For example, the shaman's assistant negotiates the organization of rituals. The shaman stays in the taiga where no one can find him without the help of the assistant. He communicates covertly using signals similar to those used by Evenki hunters and their dogs. Despite a lack of concrete directives from the shaman, the assistant always knows when to act because they share common, contextual interpretations of situations. Andrew's assistants act as contact points connecting outsiders with Andrew, who in this way, also acts like a hunter, snaring the prey in face-to-face interaction when he is ready. [33]

Negotiations take place during a meal when business partners come together without formal rules of behavior. Business partners are guests, and by presenting delicious food and various pleasures (such as after-parties with alcohol and girls), Andrew manipulates the hierarchical dispositions like other Evenki during the establishment of *andaki* relationships. The guests become hostage to the host's generosity, and entangled in flirtatious and aggressive behavior—the strategy for maintaining and balancing initially asymmetrical relationships with strangers. [34]

Andrew's actions are unpredictable; his plans change constantly and spontaneously. He has several flats and houses where he can stay for a night, and circulates, like other Evenki, between the village, summer and winter camps. Furthermore, Andrew's business does not focus on the accumulation of wealth, but on the way itself. His main goal is to expand his route of business, which presently includes Moscow, a few European capitals, as well as larger, Chinese cities. Ideally, Andrew could leave the business world behind and embark on a Buddhist pilgrimage to Nepal, or simply live on the road with the possibility to travel back and forth without stopping at one place. [35]

Andrew's everyday life bears a certain amount of risk. Managing and harmonizing (rather than reducing) those risks is his main occupation. Risk is a very important factor helping to keep the whole system moving and alive. No investment takes place without risk. And the high level of excitement it generates should be redirected to avoid fixation or a narrow concentration of emotions and efforts. Andrew and his assistants rid themselves of "stress" in casinos according to the homeopathic logic that the problem should be treated by the cause. So, the fear of losing money in business should be overlapped by the feeling of losing money in a casino. [36]

Time equals money in the world of commerce, and the casino offers a place to lose both. From this point of view, poker offers a chance to lose time, and roulette, money. Any opportunity to visit a casino is taken; they are the main sightseeing targets in new cities. There is a certain limit, around $5,000, on spending during one night. If someone wins, the prize should be spent or shared immediately. The casino is not the place to obtain, but rather to lose things in order to balance risks. By losing in roulette, Andrew stabilizes his attitude towards losing money in frames helping him to discipline himself. Business, like hunting, is an occupation for Andrew in which he uses danger as a source and condition for the combination of general awareness and situated concentration. When Buryats become involved in a situation it is important for them to forget the dangers and possible failure. For Evenki, the possibility of risk helps them to become fully immersed in the situation. Risky situations can be a source of discipline and an initiation in new activities. Risk stimulates new possibilities and new circles. Andrew continuously stimulates movement and change so to jump from one risky situation to another. [37]

4. Concluding Remarks

To sum up the common elements of the Evenki and Buryat strategies we can say that the continuity of process is very important for both. Things forgotten should be remembered, as lost things should someday be found. Evenki people, however, feel this never-ending process should stimulate new circles like new lives, discrete from each other, yet highly appreciated for refreshing the whole process. For Buryats, the guarantee of reversibility is stressed because they see the process as a movement between the two points of wholeness and emptiness. This binary logic leads to the fear that at some point the system will be unable to switch back (from remembering to forgetting and vice versa; or from involvement in the situation and self control to loss of both). [38]

In this article we never focused directly on the problems of risk perception and management and its incorporation into biography, but whenever we tried to study the various practices of both Buryat and Evenki people we always came across these topics. As a result of this anthropological research we could propose a basic conclusion, a rather common assumption that people from different cultures deal with different risks and construct different biographies. The way they do it could be characterized by the same pattern similarly applicable either to risk or to biography. For example, Evenki people explore the circularity of processes both in the experiencing of risks, that are essential for any kind of luck and fortune, and the manipulation of self identities, which are incorporated into their multi-scale biographies, and constructed for strangers. For Buryat people, risks are uncomfortable, and their own biographies are products of their constant attempts to control risks and not to forget biographical knowledge, because of the problem of the irreversibility of the loss and trauma which may result. We suppose that the way people experience risks (how they feel about risky situations) and the way people construct their biographies are parts of a more general strategy of engagement with the world. And the hypnotic performances, described in the beginning of this article, showed the difference between the Buryat and Evenki strategy for this involvement. [39]

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